

# **THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING APRIL 14, 2004**

*Handout(s) given out tonight:*

1. *Warrant Committee Reserve Fund – FY04*
2. *FY2004 Snow Accounts memo from DPW Director Peter Castanino*
3. *Association of Town Finance Committees Western Workshop on May 6, 2004*
4. *Annual Town Meeting Warrant for 2004*
5. *Special Town Meeting Warrant for April 28, 2004*
6. *TOB Classification and Compensation Plan presentation*
7. *2004 Warrants for the Annual and Special Town Meeting (see Town Administrator Kleckner's office for copy if needed)*
8. *Fire Stations Borrowing and FY05 Debt Service April 14, 2004 memo from Treasurer Freiner*

Members absent: D. Hobbs and W. Hofmann

Also present: Selectman Will Brownsberger, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, HR Director Diane Jenkins, Police Lt. Peter Hoerr, Tim Turner (member of the Belmont Center Parking Committee), and Town Accountant Barbara Hagg

## ***Acceptance of Minutes***

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the April 7, 2004 meeting.

- *Member Flewelling made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of the April 7, 2004 meeting.*

## ***Warrant Articles***

*Article 9 Personnel Policy Guide Revision* – There are no scheduled changes to this Article.

*Article 10 Position Classification and Compensation Plan (Handout 6)* – With the remaining members of the Personnel Board, they will actively support the changes encompassed in Article 10. HR Director Diane Jenkins reviewed the history of this Article with the Committee. At a previous Town Meeting, some portions of the upgrade have already been approved through Town Meeting funding the accepted salaries.

Member Kobus asked for the information that Town Meeting will view and/or receive regarding the salaries. Town Administrator Kleckner said it will go on the Town's website. Ms. Jenkins added that we are only going to capture job changes up until

January 1, 2004 because it allows us to get a list published in the Annual Report. The consultant established the original ranges, and since then, it has been updated to reflect cost of living increases.

(DMG) Maximus still has a contract with the Town. When new positions or reclassifications occur, they are sent to Maximus for their determination. Ms. Jenkins thinks a position classification study should be done no more than every 10 years.

Member Brusch asked if technology affects a position's classification. Ms. Jenkins said it probably does, but as technology increases, some positions may get a little easier.

The Warrant Committee will vote on this Article next week.

*Article 5 Salaries of Elected Officials* – Member Heigham said there were no changes to the Town Moderator, Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Assessors. A state statute allows an increase in salary for the amount of educational degrees an Assessor obtains. The Town Clerk is receiving a cost of living raise to put her at \$70,326. The Town Treasurer has increased her salary by 5% (1% cost of living and 4% step increase) in her budget. Treasurer Freiner was told the 4% is consistent with other management positions. Town Administrator Kleckner agreed.

Member Curtis asked how the 4% step increase compared to other step increases in the Town. Town Administrator Kleckner answered it is equivalent.

Member Heigham mentioned that last year's midpoints were \$67K for the Town Clerk and \$75K for the Town Treasurer. He also added the Town Clerk receives \$2,400/year salary for being on the Board of Registrars. The other three Registrars each received \$1,500 in the past, but the stipend is no longer in the budget. As a cost saving measure, the Town Clerk would like the other Registrars put on an hourly rate. There is "probably" enough money in the budget to cover the Registrars if they went on an hourly basis. The Board of Registrars works the one-day per election and ensures the ballot count is accurate. Member Flewelling thinks the amounts should stay at the \$1,500 per Registrar.

Member Heigham asked if the Town should be paying for part-time elected official's health insurance. There is a state statute for paid elected officials that makes it the Town's decision to cover those who elect health insurance. He does not believe the Town should be covering these costs. Town Administrator Kleckner said the Board of Selectmen has the authority whether the Town will participate. The exposure is limited to the elected officials on pages 2-3 of the Town Meeting Warrant. The amount of money is between \$4-\$17K per year per person to the Town depending on the plan they choose.

Chairman Widmer thinks the Warrant Committee should review this issue in the fall, and then the Committee could make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. Member Brusch believes this should be taken up with the current Warrant Committee in June.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Oates seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to **recommend** Article 5 to Town Meeting.*

*Article 32 Acceptance of Chapter 32B, Section 18, of the General Laws – Town Administrator Kleckner would like to officially adopt this issue for the Town, since it has financial implications for the Town. Town Administrator Kleckner is not sure of the opposition within the Town.*

Member Kobus clarified this Article says we are adopting into our bylaw something we have already done in practice.

Member Tillotson asked the savings regarding this Article. Town Administrator Kleckner thinks that most people are in Medicare, and there will not be a large savings currently. Ms. Jenkins added it may not be savings, but experience has shown health insurance costs have increased much more than they need to in the active pool.

- *Member Flewelling made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and the Committee voted to **recommend** Article 32 to Town Meeting.*
- *Member McCormick **abstained** from said vote.*

*Article 25 Authorization to Amend Belmont Alarm By-law – Lt. Hoerr said the purpose of the bylaw is to encourage people to register and maintain their alarms. We require people to register the alarm with the type, address, and contacts. We are requiring this currently one-time registration be amended to an annual registration, with a \$25 fee to go into the Town's General Fund. Also proposed is a \$250 annual fee for setting up a master box for the fire alarm system. There have been no fees in the past for registration. Per fiscal year, one false alarm is not charged, however anything more than that per alarm is charged.*

Selectman Mahoney asked if this pertains to residents or businesses. Lt. Hoerr said it pertains to both. Letters would be sent out to those currently registered this year and every year thereafter. The bylaw makes the Police Chief or his assignee the Alarm Administrator. Currently, the system is up and running. The computer generates the letters. Those can be 50-100 letters at a time just to send out the alarm charges. There are about 500-600 alarm charge letters yearly. Last year, there were over 1,200 alarms, with most being false.

Member Kobus is concerned there will need to be a person assigned to fulfill this administrative duty, if not now, but in the future. Lt. Hoerr answered the Police Chief does not believe any additional personnel will be necessary.

Member Fitzgerald asked if it would be better to charge a higher penalty to the false alarms or those who have not kept their information current, rather than charge everyone who has alarms. Lt. Hoerr said currently some of that is done. It also helps us to get the information annually on who the users are so we can make them accountable.

Member McCormick thinks that since we are asking departments to find ways to increase revenues, we need to support this endeavor. Selectman Mahoney also supports this as a revenue raiser.

Vice Chairman White would like to see a dramatic increase in false alarm rates than a yearly registration. Member Flewelling agrees.

Lt. Hoerr gave some master box rates of surrounding towns. Member Tillotson asked for false alarms charges in surrounding towns as well.

The Board of Selectmen unanimously supports this Article.

- *Member Brusch made a motion, Member McCormick seconded said motions, and Members Kobus, Heigham, Callanan, Stratford, and Selectman Mahoney voted to **recommend** Article 25 to Town Meeting.*
- *Chairman Widmer and Members White, Curtis, Schafer, Fitzgerald, Oates, Tillotson, Flewelling voted to **not recommend** Article 25 to Town Meeting.*

*Article 11 Appropriation of Capital Expenditures (Pavement Management section) –* DPW Director Castanino gave a brief history of the storm water issue on Marsh Street (previously discussed last week). In attempting to correct this problem a while ago, Community Development had two options: put a catch basin in, or connect to a storm drain down the road. He is assuming a storm drain was not extended. The price is \$91,500 is for going across private property by taking an easement by eminent domain. By using the road, the cost is over \$172K. The second approach is about 20' longer. The construction costs are similar, but the real difference is the restoration of the road.

Member Fitzgerald asked if there are other properties in Town that have similar problems. Mr. Castanino answered that most storm water ends up at a low point. He cannot think of another spot in Town with no storm drain currently there.

Member Curtis sees this as a problem created by a resident affecting other residents that will cost the Town as much money as is in the Sidewalk budget.

From a Public Works point of view, Mr. Castanino thinks the Town has the responsibility to find a place for water on a public road. He would feel it is the Town's responsibility to drain it as it is done for other roads.

Member Flewelling remembers this issue from a while ago. He recalls it involved a neighbor who took remedy at his own expense. Mr. Castanino added there is also no sanitary sewer in this section of the road.

Mr. Castanino said many times, with drainage, the problem is twofold: how many catch basin grates we have and their ability to catch water quickly. We have added storm

drains by resident's requests that the Town has voted: Myrtle Street and Orchard Street from School Street towards Goden Street. Mr. Castanino then went through the process of going in through an easement. Depending on the route, the number of properties affected would be three or four either way.

Member Brusch thought it would be better to add this to Pavement Management because it was pavement of the roadway. However, there has been discussion that it may be a sewer problem. Politically, this is 10% of the Capital Budget going to one item. Chairman Widmer would prefer it would not come out of the Capital Budget.

Article 11 will be voted on next week.

*Article 22 Claflin Street Parking Lot* – Town Administrator Kleckner updated the Committee on the progress. This will cost about \$300K. A private property owner will pay \$80K of that cost and grant some land. The Town derives 43 spaces, a new meter machine, and some enhancements to the parking area. This will be funded by a non-operating source, either borrowing (a five year period) or taking it from the Kendall account. It will generate \$9,500 - \$10,000 in additional parking receipts.

Chairman Widmer would like to discuss how we would pay for this, and have that put into the eventual vote. Treasurer Freiner does not have a recommendation on either funding approach. The five-year borrowing would be \$43K/year annually from the operating budget.

Selectman Brownsberger does not have a problem taking it out of the Kendall Fund.

Member Brusch is not supporting this Article, but if she were, she would support it coming out of Kendall because the operating budget is too tight right now. Member Brusch does not feel the additional spaces are necessary, and she feels there should be more financial support from the businesses that are benefiting.

Treasurer Freiner said the funding would not be coming out of operating until FY06. The Town Hall funding would be decreasing, so there would be available funds there.

Mr. Turner said the \$9,500 per year is the maximum revenue since over half of the spaces would be complimentary. Last year before Town Meeting, the Belmont Center Parking issue was introduced as being a short-term private/public property arrangement split 50/50. He is not sure where the 75/25 came about. Chairman Widmer answered the Warrant Committee voted a few weeks ago to keep it at the 75/25 split. Mr. Turner added this is not the recommendation of the Belmont Center Parking Committee that he is on. It is one recommendation, but we did not talk about this \$300K plan. He does not know where this recommendation came from. He does not recall the Committee voting on this.

Selectman Mahoney understood it was a recommendation of the Belmont Center Parking Study Committee to the Board of Selectmen in order to enhance parking to Belmont Center. The Board of Selectmen supports this Article.

Member Fitzgerald is concerned with the dollar amount the Town will be losing.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member White seconded said motion, and Chairman Widmer, Selectman Mahoney, and Members Schafer, Fitzgerald, Oates, Callanan, Flewelling, Heigham, and Kobus voted to **recommend** Articles 16 and 22 to Town Meeting with the assumption using the Kendall Funds.*

- *Members Brusch, Stratford, Tillotson, Curtis, and McCormick voted to **not recommend** Articles 16 and 22 to Town Meeting using the Kendall Funds.*

### ***Potential Reserve Fund Requests (Handout 1)***

This Article will be discussed further next week.

### ***Other***

Member Flewelling made a motion, and it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk